

Michael S. Carona, Orange County Sheriff
Chairman, California Council on Criminal Justice

Written Testimony for the Little Hoover Commission
On the Effectiveness of the State Office of Criminal Justice Planning
May 22, 2003

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony to the Commission for this hearing.

My own personal experience, based on almost thirty years in law enforcement as well as my experience serving as the Sheriff of Orange County has educated me on the importance of criminal justice programs working in conjunction with programs in public health, mental health, social services, and the causes of crime. Finding alternatives to reduce crime and recidivism has been a driving force in many of the successful programs at the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

I believe the state is doing a good job in this respect. It wasn't long ago that criminal justice programs were seen in a vacuum, separate from public health, mental health, social services, etc. In fact, some may still view such programs as being mutually exclusive.

However, it is my understanding that OCJP's victim services division in particular has made great strides in coordinating with public health, mental health, and social services in recent years. My county in particular has been involved in a multidisciplinary effort funded by OCJP's Drug Endangered Children's (DEC) Program. This program consisted of the Orange County D.A.'s office as the grantee and included on the grant either in the budget or in Operational Agreements, the County Social Services, DOJ's Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement (BNE) which encompasses law enforcement representatives on its task force, a social worker, mental health (for psychological evaluations and counseling), a hospital/public health nurse and my crime lab as part of the hazmat team. OCJP also hosted two DEC conferences that brought together the various disciplines mentioned above, and has been a model program for other states wishing to implement a DEC program in their home state.

Secondly, I understand that questions have been raised as to whether OCJP should be the primary grant program managers for Criminal Justice Programs. From both a policy and a management effectiveness standpoint, OCJP is and should be the primary state and federal grant program management agency for California's criminal justice programs. Co-locating policy and grants management in a single agency ensures consistency of process, uniformity of opportunity and offers the best strategic vision of interrelated policy questions and the solutions to them.

The Board of Corrections has had some limited experience in the management of a relatively narrow range of state programs. However, unlike OCJP, neither BOC's statutory definition nor their specific duties include grant programs or programs

management. Rather, their charter includes a comprehensive study of the "entire subject of crime.....including the causes of crime, possible methods of prevention of crime, methods of detection of crime and apprehension of criminals.....and the entire subject of penology....."

Additionally, the Governor has designated OCJP as the State Administrative Agency for the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U. S. Department of Justice. Furthermore, a wide ranging collection of state and federal programs have also been assigned to OCJP over the past 30 years, making it the California agency that has the most and diverse state and federal grants management responsibilities.

Finally, I believe there is a need for a statewide strategic plan and coordination of criminal justice programs with other programs that address the causes of crime. I also understand that OCJP already is engaged in planning and coordination, and intends to conduct further planning activities, such as developing a revised comprehensive statewide criminal justice plan.

Although programs and efforts exist that are preventative in nature, they may be housed at various public and private agencies at the federal level, state, and local levels. The strategic plan would need to include all of the various entities to ensure proper coordination and would require a lead agency such as OCJP to do so, as well as proper statewide support and funding to carry out such an effort. As with most problems, resources are usually dedicated toward reacting to an existing problem. Because the aftermath of crime is usually concrete and visible, the focus has been on reactions to crime, such as apprehending criminals.

There likely are other challenges to developing such a plan, including changes in administrators and governors with different philosophies, and disagreement as to the causes of crime.